

HOW WE SEE OURSELVES AND OTHERS

Do you visualize a shrewd, cool, James Bond type when you think of a "typical" careerist in our collection directorate? If you do, chances are that you are a careerist in one of the other directorates. But if you consider a collection officer an ambitious, sociable, and warm individual, you probably work in the collection directorate yourself. According to a study made by the Assessment and Evaluation Staff of the Office of Medical Services, the kind of stereotype you see depends a lot on where you sit.

Study Of Stereotyping

To throw some light on stereotyping in the Organization, the A & E Staff asked experienced officers in the collection and the production directorates to check adjectives describing a "typical" careerist in each directorate. (For the purposes of the study a stereotype was defined by the staff as a rigid, oversimplified, overgeneralized, biased perception of a person or group of people.)

Agreement On Mutual Traits

The A & E Staff expected that the rating officers would see many good traits as characteristic of careerists in both directorates. And they did. Thus, all raters agreed that the following traits are characteristic of both production and collection officers:

alert	dependable	intelligent	realistic
calm	efficient	interests wide	reasonable
capable	energetic	logical	reliable
clear-thinking	enterprising	mature	responsible
confident	foresighted	organized	serious
conscientious	imaginative	patient	stable
cooperative	industrious	practical	thorough
curious	initiative	rational	understanding

(This list could probably be extended to brave, clean, reverent, etc., and officially recognized as the "Boy Scout syndrome," consisting of characteristics that are desirable in any professional worker regardless of his particular job.)

Individual Group Characteristics

The rating officers agree that the following traits are characteristic only of the collection officer: active, adventurous, adaptable, clever, courageous, healthy, daring, and inventive. The emphasis here is clearly on action - particularly on a "James Bond" kind of quick-witted, intrepid action.

They also agreed that the two traits--fairminded and methodical--are characteristic only of the production officer. This suggests that the raters agree that our producers are objective and systematic.

Another group of traits emerged which the raters agreed were characteristic of collection officers. However, only the production raters thought they were also characteristic of production officers, while collection felt they did not apply to production officers. These traits are: aggressive, individualistic, resourceful, self-confident, tactful, versatile. Evidently production officers feel

that social poise and a capacity for independent action are as important in their jobs as in collection jobs, while collection officers feel these characteristics are important only for their own jobs.

Reversing the above analysis, we find that all raters agreed that the following two traits are characteristic of production officers: frank and honest. Production raters felt that those traits applied only to production officers, while collection raters felt they were also characteristic of collection officers.

Apparently then, in the eyes of production raters, openness and candidness are not considered particularly characteristic of collection officers, whereas the collection raters feel they are. In fact, production raters go a little further. They consider that shrewdness and coolness are characteristic only of the collection officer.

Not only did the collection raters disagree with this "shrewd, cool" characterization, but they saw themselves instead as sociable, warm people with the following traits applying to themselves only: ambitious, appreciative, attractive, charming, considerate, forceful, humorous, sociable, and warm. This list, in effect, constitutes the collection officer's self-concept.

In turn, the production officer's self-concept--traits which the production raters considered to apply only to production officers--is as follows: ambitious, appreciative, considerate, deliberate, dignified, forceful, generous, humorous, peaceable.

If we match the above two lists of traits, we note that the raters think the following traits are characteristic of careerists in their directorate only: ambitious, appreciative, considerate, forceful, and humorous. This constellation of traits describes a "nice guy" with a mind of his own who is on his way up - a description most people would not object having applied to them.

Looking at the results in another way, we can list those traits which each group of raters thought was more characteristic of careerists in one directorate as compared with the other. These are in effect the stereotypes which the particular sample of officers hold of themselves and of each other.

TRAITS THAT PRODUCTION RATERS THINK ARE MORE CHARACTERISTIC OF CAREERISTS IN ONE DIRECTORATE COMPARED WITH THE OTHER

Collection

ingenious	hard-hearted	adventurous	masculine
inventive	wary	cynical	courageous
shrewd	daring	cool	healthy
opportunistic	spunky	tough	adaptable

Production

reflective	frank	deliberate	pleasant
honest	methodical	forceful	generous
generous	obliging	ambitious	peaceable
fair-minded	forgiving	considerate	humorous

The production raters' concept of the production officer seems close to that of a hard working but genial scholar. They see the collection officer as not particularly deep-thinking or far-sighted, but brave and quick-witted--if a bit opportunistic.

TRAITS THAT COLLECTION RATERS THINK ARE MORE
CHARACTERISTIC OF CAREERISTS IN ONE DIRECTORATE COMPARED WITH THE OTHER

Collection

active	charming	forceful	resourceful
adaptive	cheerful	healthy	self-confident
adventurous	civilized	humorous	sociable
aggressive	clever	individualistic	tactful
ambitious	considerate	inventive	versatile
appreciative	courageous	outgoing	warm
attractive	daring	poised	

Production

methodical painstaking patient fairminded

The collection raters' concept of the collection officer embodies many traits which are clearly esteemed by our culture. The collection raters' concept of the production officer seems rather in line with the way production officers see themselves.

Conclusions

Although the results were not considered definitive and other raters in other situations might perform differently, the A & E Staff concluded that the study did indicate that the collection and production officers do have stereotyped views of one another. Any of us who pigeonholes others by speaking glibly of "Latin temperament" or "the Log-type" is also guilty of stereotyping. Seeing a person as a member of a group rather than as an individual impairs effective communication which is an important ingredient in good human relations.